

THOMAS DONALDSON

US Fr 7210 tons

1115/20
Mar. 45

68.26.30N 33.44.20E

SUNK

Torpedoed.

B-5 report.

27 April 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR FILEALL TIMES GCT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by the Survivors of the SS THOMAS DONALDSON,
U. S. Freighter, 7210 G.T., owned by WSA, operated by American
Export Lines. file

1. The THOMAS DONALDSON was torpedoed at 1115 GCT, 20 March 1945, in 68.26.30N 33.44.20E, having sailed from Gourock, Scotland 11 March in convoy JW-65 for Murmansk, Russia, loaded with a general cargo, consisting of 700 tons ammunition, locomotives, tenders, etc., draft 25' forward, 27' aft. Vessel sank stern first at 1545.

2. Ship was on course 206° true, speed 10.5 knots in 18 fathoms, not zigzagging, degaussing on current in coils positive 131, radio silent, 9 lookouts; 2 on bow, 2 on stern, 1 in crow's nest and 4 on bridge. The weather was partly cloudy, sea moderate to choppy, wind NE force 2-3, daylight (sun not visible), visibility 6-10 miles. Convoy was formed in two columns. DONALDSON was the 20th ship in starboard column of 26 ships.

3. At 1115 a torpedo struck on the starboard side below the waterline in the engine room. Track of torpedo was not seen. Ship was immediately out of control. Piece of plating on starboard side flew up and demolished lifeboat. Bulkhead of hospital abaft the beam inboard of starboard passageway blown out. A crack was noticed in the hull amidships on port side. No. 3 deck plating slightly buckled. There was no fire. Radio damage not known; no distress signal sent. Engine room flooded immediately; rest of flooding was very slow. Vessel was taken in tow by one of the escorts but at 1545 she sank. At 1115 Armed Guard opened fire at a dark object range about 600 yards. They were doubtful as to what it was; 60 rounds of 20 MM fire were expended. Confidential publications were thrown overboard in a weighted box.

4. Ship was abandoned upon order from the Master. Part of crew abandoned ship at 1125, remainder of crew abandoned just before ship sank. Survivors were picked up by escort vessels and taken ashore. Total complement on board was 69, including 42 merchant crew, 27 Armed Guard; 65 survived, 1 known dead, 3 missing and presumed dead all merchant crew.

5. The sub was not sighted. (See Paragraph 3)

6. Interviewing officer stated that a floating object with horns was reported within a matter of an hour prior to the attack.

Note: The SS HORACE BUSHNELL (US) in the same convoy also was torpedoed on 20 March 1945 and later beached.

BARBARA CONARD
Lt. (jg) USNR

DISSMINATION: Op-16-E-2, 16-P-1, 16-PT, 16-Z(5 copies), Op-20-G, Op-23-L, Op-30-M, Op-39-P-3(2 copies), COMINCH F-20, F-21, F-41, FX-43, FX-45, AFASU, BuOrd CG(4 copies), Coord Res & Dev, DIO 1, 3, 4, 5(2 copies), 6, 7(3 copies), 8(2 copies), 10(4 copies), 11(3 copies), 12, 13, 14(4 copies), 15 NDs, Op-28, BuPers-535, BuOrd RE-6-A.

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Authority NND 968133

DRAFTER	EXTENSION NUMBER	ADDRESSEES	PRECEDENCE
FROM <u>COM 12TH FLT</u>		ASTERISK (*) MAILGRAM ADDRESSEE	1
RELEASED BY		CNO	2
DATE <u>22 MAR 1945</u>			3
TOR CODEROOM <u>1945</u>			4
DECODED BY <u>SCHMICK</u>		COM 10TH FLT C&R NSA BAD	5
PARAPHRASED BY <u>TEAL/wbellingham</u>			6
ROUTED BY <u>THOMPSON</u>			7
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UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED THIS DISPATCH WILL BE TRANSMITTED WITH DEFERRED PRECEDENCE AND AS ADMINISTRATIVE.			9
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221734

NCR 2713

ORIGINATOR FILL IN DATE AND TIME:	DATE	TIME	GCT

ON OUTGOING DISPATCHES PLEASE LEAVE ABOUT ONE INCH CLEAR SPACE BEFORE BEGINNING TEXT

ACTION

(COM 12TH FLT SENDS PAGE TO CONWAY USA AND BRITISH ADMIRALTY DELEGATION WASHINGTON)

TOTAL 24 SHIPS OF CONVOY JW 65 ARRIVED KOLA 21 MARCH
 AS IN MY 121737 LESS THOMAS DONALDSON (TORPELOED) SUNK
 ENROUTE HORACE BUSHNELL (TORPELOED) AGROUND ABANDONED
 NEAR KOLA INLET

16...ACT

39...DR...20G...FX37...20M...BAD...NSA...23...CNO...

BUPERS.COMINCH.....

SECRET

Make original only. Deliver to Code Room Watch Officer in person. (See Art. 76 (4) NAVREGS.)

OPNAV-NCR-15

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F-02		24
F-05		25
F-07		26
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F-34		35
F-4		36
FX01		37
FX30		38
FX37		39
FX40		40
IG-00		41
VCNO		42
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DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 968133

DRAFTER	EXTENSION NUMBER	ADDRESSEES	PRECEDENCE
UK BASE SECTION LONDON		ASTERISK (*) MAILGRAM ADDRESSEE	
FROM		WAR DEPARTMENT	PRIORITY
RELEASED BY			ROUTINE
DATE	22 MARCH 45		DEFERRED
TOR CODEROOM	0837		
DECODED BY		INFORMATION	PRIORITY
TYPED BY	GEORGION/Hausler		ROUTINE
BY	VOSBURGH		DEFERRED
ROUTED BY			
UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED THIS DISPATCH WILL BE TRANSMITTED WITH THE HIGHEST PRECEDENCE AND AS ADMINISTRATIVE			IF OPERATIONAL CHECK BELOW
UK 30702	21 MARCH 45	NCR 2209	<input type="checkbox"/>
CM-TN-22851			

ORIGINATOR FILL IN DATE AND TIME: _____ DATE _____ TIME _____ GCT _____

ON OUTGOING DISPATCHES PLEASE LEAVE ABOUT ONE INCH CLEAR SPACE BEFORE BEGINNING TEXT

BY PRINTER FROM ARMY

WSA 1302-W 820 TO CONWAY WSA FOR HELMBOLD FROM
DEVLIN AND MONGOE WSA SIGNED EISENHOWER UK 30702.

ADMIRALTY CASUALTY SECTION HAVE ADVISED FOLLOWING:
 STEAMSHIP THOMAS DONALDSON SUNK.
 STEAMSHIP HORACE BUSHNELL TORPEDOED ABANDONED AND
 AGROUND KOLA INLET. BOTH VESSELS JW 65.
 NO FURTHER DETAILS. CONTINUED.

COMINCH...COG
 16...FX37...OOR...20G...BUPERS...CNO...39...23...
 ARMY FILE.....

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F-34		35
F-4		36
FX01		37
FX37		38
FX40		39
IG-00		40
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SECRET
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OPNAV 19-67

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